

APR 1965
 & SUN

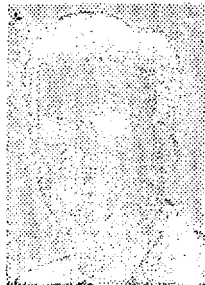
E. 373,849

DEC 16 1965

Radio Satire Hilarious on Griffin Show

By AL SALERNO

GEORGE CARLIN has the idiotic sounds of radio today down pat. He has worked them into a devastating satire — the asinine disk jockeys, the alibis for music, the ridiculous claims and back patting by the stations and the commercials that induce nausea. A hilarious routine, on Merv Griffin's time last night. . . . Prior to Carlin, Griffin had Jimmy Boyd on for the first genuine laughter I've had in days. Boyd made a splash singing "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus." But that was years ago. I don't know where he has been in the interim. How come talent-starved TV hasn't used him more? He's a very funny young man, and it all sounds so spontaneous. Does a fine folk tune, too, with guitar.



Al Salerno

Bob Hope's first variety hour in color was a worthy one. Not just because of the color or the star power. It was cleverly conceived, staged and written. Of course, it didn't hurt to have Bing Crosby, Jack Benny and Janet Leigh along for the ski-nose ride. . . . Ch. 4 had a special of its own, "Hollywood on the Hudson," about movie-making here, past and present. Doug Fairbanks, as narrator, appeared more often to be acting at us rather than talking to us. The film, however, had much that was amusing or eye catching, including clips of the famous silent, "The Great Train Robbery" (probably about the first commuter line), which was made just across the Hudson.

You don't have to be a fine actor to be a star in television, says Bill Smith. Yet, television has ruined some actors by rushing them to the top too fast, Smith adds. Who is Bill Smith?

If you watch NBC's "Laredo," you'll see the familiar faces of Neville Brand (the least handsome cowboy hero on TV), and Peter Brown (one of the most), and also Bill Smith, a newcomer to the medium. He is the tallest of the Ranger trio, falls somewhere between Brand and Brown in

looks. Closer to Brown.

Smith is 30, well over 6 feet, lean, hard and sometimes mean-looking, born on a Missouri cattle ranch and raised in Los Angeles. He wears his hair long to reflect a written-in Indian influence.

"I hope I'm not mistaken for a rock 'n' roller because of the hair," he says. "There is a different demeanor about me, though, I hope."

There is. But neither does he look like a chap who taught Russian before he became an actor and developed his theories about television.

Smith took his degree in Russian at UCLA, after studying German and French at the University of Munich and at the Sorbonne in Paris. He married a French actress, Michele Marley; they have a 5-year-old son.

"After four years in Air Force security, I hoped to work for the CIA," Smith says. "Then, I found out you can't work for the government in a classified job if you marry anyone born out of the States."

So, he got a job teaching a Russian verb syntax class and took his first acting job to "make a few extra bucks. But the bug gets you." He's acting six years.

MGM signed him to what he calls "a stock contract at small dough, and for three years I parked cars to make table money."

Now, about TV and actors.

"TV ruins some actors," Smith insists. "Some of them die professionally before they have had a chance to learn anything. They'll take a guy 6 feet 2 who looks like a cowboy and sign him to carry a show. If he doesn't do a competent job, he is through."

"Actors don't get good until they can work at their craft, and some of the best are the oldest. In England, I met guys doing their first TV, but they had been with the Old Vic for 10 years."

"Still, it doesn't take a fine actor to be a star in TV. Some of the best have bombed. Sometimes the personality on the small screen means more than talent. You can't say Clint Walker is a better actor than Ben Gazzara. Yet, Clint's show (Cheyenne) went and Gazzara's (Arrest and Trial) didn't go over."

Smith's show still awaits a jury verdict.

Maybe the TV audience is becoming more sophisticated. Readers now are discussing pilot shows for a year ahead in their letters. There seems some confusion over the possible Girl From U. N. C. L. E. series. This is how matters stand. An episode of Man From U. N. C. L. E. has been filmed with a girl agent starred. It will be telecast early next year. If it gives off sparks, consideration will be give to turning it into a series.

More mail on Robert Lansing: Yes, there is a sample film of a projected new series for him, a Western. Title: The Long Hunt of April Savage, or just April Savage, which even so is a terrible name to hang on such a he-man. The sample, however, has not arrived in New York for ABC decision makers to rule on, they say. Lansing would be hunting murderers, if the show gets on the air.